

St. Mary Bourne Parish Council

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Flood & Emergency Group Meeting

Wednesday 10th January 2024

4:30pm at The Committee Room, The Village Centre, St Mary Bourne

Present: Dave Burlison(DB), Sarah Cooney(SC), Clem Jones(CJ), Ed Makgill(EM), Maxine Owen(MO), Sarah Reghif (SR), Dave Peart(DP). Tom Thacker (TT).

EM welcomed everyone to the meeting, acknowledged that it was a very full agenda, and invited Sarah Reghif(SR) from Hampshire County Council(HCC) to introduce herself and explain her role at HCC.

SR explained that she was part of a Flood & Water Management Team at HCC, and her team had the responsibility of all things connected to Flood and Water which were not the responsibility of Southern Water (SW), the Environment Agency (EA), or Hampshire Highways. Such as Water Courses, all ditches, planning. SR is specifically in an investigatory role, particularly when failings in existing infrastructure should be challenged.

Water Levels:

CJ gave an update on Water Levels in the area. The levels are high enough now that the Bourne Rivulet is flowing into fields/floodplains/water meadows along the valley. More locally two bridges at Swampton are already swamped. The rivulet is already out of the bank at Gangbridge.

It was agreed that the rising levels are of considerable concern, and pressure should be maintained on the responsible agencies to deliver any mitigation plans they have. The PC through the Flood and Emergency Group (FEG) will continue to monitor levels alongside the data available from the Environment Agency.

The FEG thanked CJ for his continued work monitoring at a local level. SR offered to send links to the websites she uses for Geological Information, as the factoring in of this information could help make the information even more accurate. A comparison of the data generated by the EA and that generated locally should be compared at a quieter time, to check that the data correlates and is reflecting what happens in reality. All agreed that Ground Water assessment is very difficult to do, SR only knows of 3 companies she believes are competent enough to produce anything useful, but is happy to support moving forward. It was agreed that now is the time for tactical decisions.

ACTION: Send links to FEG for Geological Data from the British Geological Society - **SR**

Southern Water:

Following on from pressure from members of the PC and FEG 24/7 Tankering has now been agreed by SW. Up to 10/01/24 ten tankers have been operating along SMB Parish's part of the valley all day until about 8pm. This will now continue through the night. There is now an understanding that although demand on the sewers from households during the night is less, the sewers still fill with groundwater, hence the requirement for 24/7 tankering. It is believed that despite the disturbance the tankers cause, they are a far better option than sewage flowing down the streets and into the river, but ultimately the FEG is aiming for SW to replace the ineffective sewer entirely.

The FEG would like to thank Floyd Cooper of Southern Water for his understanding of the issues and his efforts on the ground to find and implement solutions for the parish to the best he can within his remit and power within his organisation.

The FEG would also ask for the people of the parish to be kind to the tanker crews. They are all trying to do the best job they can for us and are attempting to minimise the disturbance as much as they can. Many of the drivers are from out of the area, so the FEG would ask parishioners to please be patient and considerate as you meet them on our rural roads.

DB from the FEG has requested that SW share their plans for disinfecting all affected areas of sewage spill/escape and is in discussion with SW on how this will be done. A solution will need to be found for disinfection of contaminated areas and the assurance that the disinfecting process doesn't add to pollution in the river. DB is continuing to press SW for their plan before the lying sewage causes health issues – people are already driving and walking through contaminated areas going about their daily lives. Of particular concern are the school children, who have no alternative, but to use the High Street to and from primary school and of course dog walkers.

SC advised that she is planning to send an Environmental Impact Request for information from SW.

ACTION: Submit an Environmental Impact Request from SW – **Sarah Cooney**

CJ advised that he believed that the EA had SOND devices that could be used to measure pollution between two specified points in the river and suggested that the FEG investigated whether these were being used currently, and whether that data could be accessed, and what the FEG would use that data for?

ACTION: Follow up with the EA regarding the device and where it is being used – **Clem Jones**

In the medium term it was agreed that the FEG should request an update from SW on what had been done in the valley since the last Groundwater Infiltration Report done in 2021. Page 17 of that report listed actions for SW to delivered on, very few, if any have been done.

SC advised that she was in conversation with Janet Clarke(JC) of the Pan-Parish Forum at Pill Hill. JC has been meeting with SW for over a year using the Infiltration Reduction Plan agreed with SW with little success. JC also advised that in the Lambourne Valley where similar infiltration problems exist Tubagel had been trialled and failed, and as a result SW replaced the whole sewer there. SC will share further information as to why the trial failed once she has those answers.

There was discussion on how SW can be held accountable for their lack of investment. Even easily fixed issues identified to them and by them in Summer 2023 were not dealt with. Often ownership of assets causes problems as each agency avoids responsibility in turn. It was suggested that the FEG follow up with the Regulator Ofwat, and ask them for support and to enforce the Infiltration Plan.

The FEG have heard that SW are making plans and looking for agreement from the Environment Agency to start overpumping from the sewer into the river. It is believed that the EA are happy with the technology they are planning to use in principle, but not necessarily in our specific instance. The process involves filtering the sewage and treating it with UV light meaning only clean water enters the river. Vitacress are being included in the discussions. The FEG agreed that further information/ clarification on safety is required. What happens if the filters block/the technology breaks? – surely this would risk pollution getting through? Is overpumping just a cost cutting exercise for SW allowing them to avoid replacing the sewer? Who has the final say as to YES or NO, this can or cannot go ahead?

There was a discussion around budgeting and what might be happening at SW with regard to this. It was suggested that government support should be requested to make sure the investment was made by SW to fix the problem, and the budgets in place to allow this.

The FEG agreed that the only long term option for the Groundwater Infiltration is for SW to fix the sewer, and would maintain the pressure for this to happen. All agreed to focus on what immediate actions were needed to assist people through this winter.

Environment Agency:

The flood barrier is already deployed at Spring Hill Lodge. (Deployed 05.01.24) This itself is causing concern from residents upstream of the barrier, concerns that the river is backing up further upstream from the High Street in SMB.

It was discussed that the EA had relinquished responsibility for the Outflow pipe adjacent to Summerhaugh next to the bridge in the centre of SMB, and TT confirmed that this was correct as the asset was owned by highways. TT agreed to forward the information to Cllr Nick Adams-King(NAK) at HCC who has overall responsibility for Highways as Head of the Council Cabinet. TT advised that NAK would direct it to the correct person to deal with it. It is noted that in 2020 this issue was discussed by the FEG, TT and the EA agreed that it was their responsibility to solve. With no follow-up, the opportunity was missed at that time.

The immediate issue is that if the water levels rise enough in the Bourne Rivulet and the Outflow pipe becomes covered, it will only be the speed of the flow of water and the difference in height of the river to the outflow pipe in the rivulet that prevents the water from flowing back up the Outflow pipe and flooding the High Street. All agreed that preventative measures should be taken now but with safety in mind, what can actually be done right now? It was agreed that the immediate solution would be to block the BT box by the Vicarage in SMB to stop it backing up and flooding.

ACTION: Share Outflow pipe issue with Cllr Nick Adams-King – **Cllr Tom Thacker**

ACTION: Block overflow pipe ASAP, as per discussion and offer at FCM – **Cllr Jeffrey**

Communication & Support:

MO requested that the FEG agree a message/statement about sandbags to be shared with the community on Facebook and on the PC website about who the Parish will supply.

It was agreed that the information on the Parish website under the Bourne Rivulet was out of date and should be brought up to date ASAP.

It was agreed that the distribution of sandbags should be monitored to know when to order sand to fill empty ones.

ACTION: Draft a message/statement and circulate to FEG approval – **MO**

ACTION: Update website – **MO, DB, EM, DP**

ACTION: Keep record of sandbag distribution – **MO**

ACTION: Update Emergency Plan with SR's contact details – **DB**

ACTION: Send copy of Emergency Plan to SR – **DB**

ACTION: Send up to date Emergency Plan to HCC & BDBC - **MO**

ACTION LIST FROM 07.12.23 Meeting (Also to be added to the Acton Tracker):

1. Confirm order for 70 sandbags to BDBC - DB
2. Organise current stock and storage at SMB – DB & DP

3. Investigate possible storage site for Stoke – DP
4. Investigate purchase of empty hessian bags & sand – EM
5. Gain approval of funding for sandbags from PC mtg on 12.12.23 – EM
6. Update Action Tracker and ensure Version numbers are kept up to date – MO
7. Chase Floyd Cooper of Southern Water re Sewer Works plan – DB
8. Follow up weed cutting regime with EA – SC
9. Follow up re Applegate anti-flood device with MOP – DB
10. Ensure ALL Silt-traps are on maintenance plan with HCC – ALL
11. Statement for Website and Social Media – EM & MO